1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

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Tiwi Marriage

[p. 8 is blank]

Cultural Isolation

PEOPLE WHO LIVE in the congested cities and towns of the modern world have difficulty in realizing how different life can be at the hunting and gathering level of human existence. The basic fact about the life of hunters and gatherers is the thinly spread-out manner in which they live and the isolation of families and households from each other. In the case of the Tiwi, these conditions of isolation and dispersal were accentuated by their island habitat. Melville and Bathurst Islands lie off the northern coast of Australia some fifty to eighty miles from Darwin, which is the administrative capital of the empty north. They are separated from the mainland by about twenty-five miles of open sea at the narrowest part. This distance is slightly greater than the distance that separates England from France at the Straits of Dover, and just as the dim outline of coastal France can be seen from England on clear days, so the dim outline of the Australian mainland can be seen from the southern edges of the islands. However, Tiwi tradition is firm and certain that before the white man's arrival there was no contact between the islands and the mainland. To them, the dimly seen coastline of Australia was *Tihambinumi*, the home of the dead, to which all Tiwi souls went after death. It follows from this they they regarded the inhabited world as composed of their own two islands, and on those islands they lived a self-contained and exclusive existence. Occasionally outsiders appeared, either castaways from surrounding areas, including presumably the Australian mainland, and in recent centuries, fishing boats and pirates from Indonesia, loosely called "Malays" in the literature. To such visitors from outside, the Tiwi were consistently and implacably hostile. Their own traditions and what little written history there is of "Malay" penetration into the Arafura Sea both tell the same story. Outsiders who landed on the islands were massacred or vigorously resisted. Whether they were classified as *Malai-ui* ("Malays") or *Wona-rui*

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

tralian tribe that was able to develop within the general Australian type of culture a number of distinct features, some of them unique, while at the same time lacking entirely other features which were widespread on the mainland. Tiwi isolation from the mainland explains the differences and the lacks; their favorable environment explains why they were able to develop certain traits along their own unique lines.

The Tribe and the Bands

Because they were isolated and few outsiders came near them, they did very little as a united tribe. Everybody on the two islands was a Tiwi, and the Tiwi world stopped at the water's edge. Fuzziness on the edges of tribal territory—a chronic headache to anthropologists working with mainland tribes—did not exist, nor did the problem of marriage outside the tribe. All Tiwi, of course, spoke the same language and practiced the same customs and regarded themselves as *the* people; these were almost the only respects in which they could be said to do anything as a tribal unit. There was no tribal government, there were no tribal officials, and no occasions which required the whole tribe to assemble together as a collective entity. For daily and yearly living, the important group was the band or horde,[2] of which there were nine. The total area of the two islands is about 3000 square miles, but some of this is swampy, some of it waterless, some of it mosquito-infested mangrove jungle, and the suitability of the rest for native living varies a good deal. Hence, the actively used and lived-in areas for each band probably averaged about two hundred square miles each and, in any case, there was not a very close relationship between band size and area occupied. Details of band size at various times are given in a later chapter, but, typically, Tiwi bands probably varied in size between a hundred and three hundred people.

The band was the territorial group with which a man most closely identified himself. Though the band lived from day to day spread out over a wide area and a man might not see many of his fellow band-members for weeks at a time, the average Tiwi thought of the two or three hundred square miles of band territory as his "own country" and of his fellow members as his own people. This is why the tribal name—Tiwi—so seldom needed to be used at home on the islands. It did not identify one group as distinct from another, since all locals were Tiwi. Just as in a New York suburb one does not say that there are some Americans in the house next door, but may say that there are some Texans or some Californians or some people from Michigan next door, so a Tiwi, seeing a group of visitors arriving in his band territory, would immediately identify them as Malauila or Rangwila or by whatever band they belonged to. A father would say casually, "I have betrothed my daughter to a

[2] Radcliffe-Brown, the great authority on Australian tribal society, tried to introduce the word "horde" for the Australian local group, but probably because of its suggestion to the popular mind of a dense concentration of people, it has never become established and in these pages we have used the more neutral word "band."

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

nothing is so startling as to be told that the Tiwi almost completely lacked what we must call "positive" magic. Such familiar mainland practices as bone pointing or "singing" a man to injury or death were completely unknown on the islands, and though references to people dying through supernatural agency were often made, it was very hard to find any positive techniques or known practitioners of such techniques. Briefly the Tiwi may be said to have believed that magical acts were possible but to have lacked any knowledge of how to perform them. If, as anthropology is wont to teach, magic is used in the simpler societies to handle and control the unpredictable or mysterious areas of life, then this absence of magic among the Tiwi needs an explanation. Our hypothesis is that the Tiwi did not use magic in human relations because they had never invented magic for use in other unpredictable areas of life—for example, to control the natural world. And they had never invented magic to control their natural world because their physical environment was on the whole a satisfactory and not a hostile universe.

If we run through the areas of life that many of the simpler peoples use magical means to control, we find that many of them were not problems for the Tiwi. The rainfall and water supply were more than adequate; the food supply was good, needing only people to come and gather it; wild animals (except snakes and crocodiles) were unknown; tropical diseases (except yaws) scarcely existed; cyclones, tornados, and earthquakes were very rare, and thunder and lightning were no more frightening there than in, say, Chicago. Death, of course, is mysterious and unpredictable everywhere, but to handle that they had most elaborate burial and mourning customs that were not magical but collective rituals. Perhaps the most favorable feature in the whole friendly Tiwi universe was the absence of any neighboring tribe. Their cultural isolation removed all fear or suspicion of what the foreigners next door might be up to, and one gets the impression from the literature, though it has not been systematically explored, that the hotbeds of magic making and sorcery were areas of the primitive world, like Melanesia or Central Australia, where people were acutely conscious of their neighbors and always expecting magic and sorcery to be directed by them across the village or tribal boundaries. The Tiwi, having no neighbors, had nobody to be suspicious of except each other, and their suspicions of each other were mostly rational suspicions, of men motivated like themselves and using the same political tricks against each other.

The strongest support for the hypothesis that the Tiwi found their environment a friendly and reassuring universe to live in comes from their wide elaboration and reliance upon the negative form of magic called taboo. As a tribe they were magic free but taboo ridden. Their generic word for anything sacred or forbidden or untouchable was *pukimani*, a word which in its most common form referred to a state of special being in which a person or thing temporarily was. Thus mourners were *pukimani* for the period of their mourning, youths undergoing initiation were *pukimani* during the ceremonies, a woman who had just given birth was *pukimani* for a week or two afterwards. Dead bodies were *pukimani* until buried; graveposts were *pukimani*

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

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Friend and Foe
(1600-1928)

ON NEARLY ALL SIDES, the emptiness of a great sea surrounded the Tiwi; to the south, the only path which might have led to the outside was blocked by the hostility of their nearest mainland neighbors. The Tiwi retained this isolation until the very end of the last century, even though for several centuries outsiders had been seen by them; ships passed along the coast and occasionally strangers landed or were cast ashore. Changes in the life on the islands were few, however, until about 1900, when the Tiwi began their integration into the modern world.

Hostility toward Outsiders (1600-1900)

Although in June of 1636 the sailor Pieter Pieterszoon in command of the ships *Cleen Amsterdam* and *Wesel* sailed along the western twenty miles of the north coast of Melville Island and named the region Van Diemensland,[1] our first real knowledge of the natives of Bathurst and Melville islands was gained by the Dutch expedition to this region in 1705 under Maarten van Delft. Men from his three ships spent about two weeks in surveying the north coast of Melville Island, the northern two-thirds of Apsley Strait between Bathurst and Melville islands, and the entire west coast of Bathurst Island.[2] They met natives several times and even allowed them aboard their ships.

Following this meeting between islanders and Europeans was a period during which the natives became extremely hostile to outsiders. Tiwi distrust of foreigners probably stemmed from these decades when the Portuguese on Timor were raiding Melville Island for slaves. Although very little has been

[1] Heeres 1899.
[2] *Ibid.* See also Mander Jones 1948 for some further data concerning Dutch knowledge of Melville Island.

[p. 96 blank]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

INTRODUCTION

MELVILLE ISLAND (Fig. 1), the research field of the 1954 National Geographic expedition, is, with the exception of Tasmania, the largest of the Australian islands. Eighty miles from east to west, and seventy from north to south, it rises barely five hundred feet above the sea. Its level surface is covered with a monotonous grey-green forest of eucalypts and acacias, whose monotony is broken only by the steep cliffs and sandy beaches of the coastline, the salt-water creeks which cut deeply into the northern coasts, and the almost impenetrable mangrove swamps that line those waterways.

Between Melville Island and the mainland are the swiftly running tideways, the reefs and shoals of the Clarence and Dundas Straits, tideways so dangerous that, before the installation of a series of flashing light-buoys, no ocean-going ship would attempt to navigate their broken waters in the darkness.

Abel Tasman, in 1644, was the first European to sail along the east, north, and west coasts of Melville Island and the adjacent Bathurst Island,[1] naming Cape Van Diemen and Van Diemen Gulf after the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. As Tasman's account of that journey was lost, we do not know whether he actually landed on the islands, or only saw them in the distance.

Sir Philip King circumnavigated the two islands in 1818 and in 1824 the British Government, both to prevent the French from settling along the northern coasts of Australia and to protect British commerce from the rapidly expanding Dutch trade, established a military post at Fort Dundas, on the Apsley Straits. After five unhappy years the authorities moved the garrison to Port Essington, on the Coburg Peninsula, on the mainland, but not before both Sir Gordon Bremer (12th Nov. 1824) and Major Campbell (1834, pp. 135–60) had made some excellent observations on aboriginal graves, burial poles, bark paintings and canoes.

In the early days of this century, a buffalo hunter, Joe C. Cooper, having gained the confidence of the warlike people of Melville Island, known as the Tiwi tribe, established a camp near Cockle Point (Fig. 1) on the south-western corner of Melville Island. There he earned a living shooting buffaloes for their hides, buffaloes whose forbears had escaped from the settlement at Fort Dundas.

[1] Melville and Bathurst Islands, separated by the narrow Apsley Strait, are both a geographic and cultural unit.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958

OI20 Tiwi OI20

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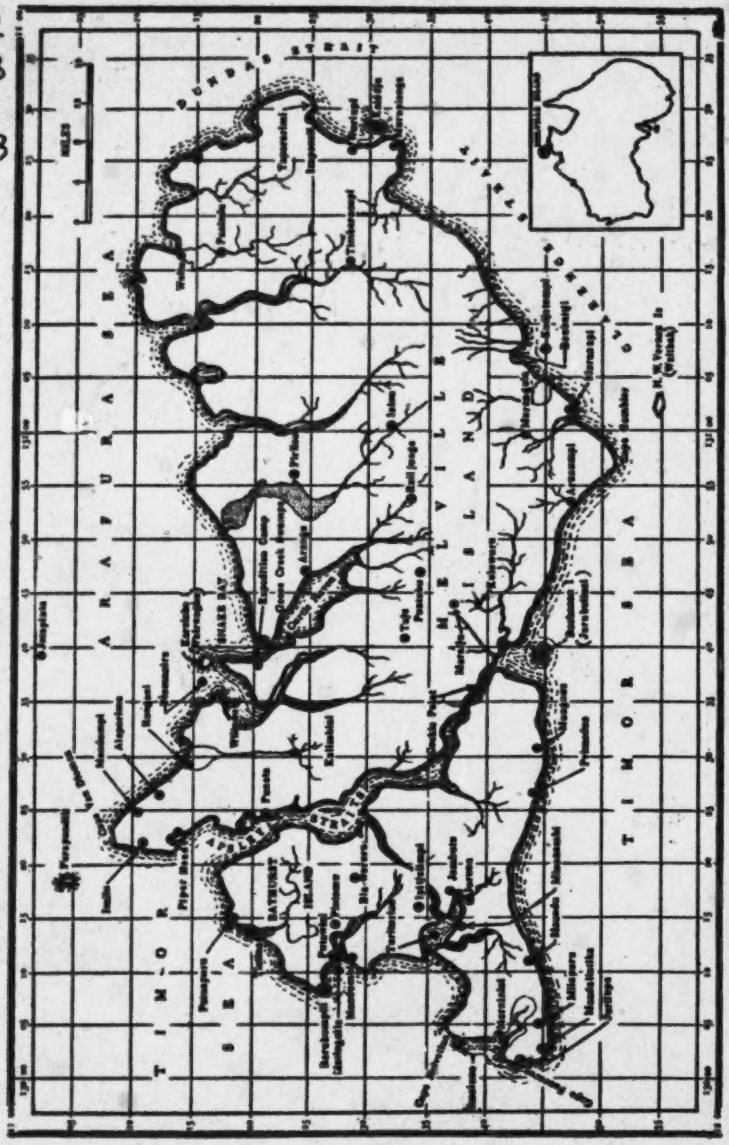
TORRES STRAIT
ARAFURA SEA
MELVILLE ISLAND
TIMOR SEA
TIMOR SEA
MILES
Darwin
Port Essington
Cape Hotham
Cape Don
Point Pearce
Point Fawcett
Point Dundas
Point Midgett
Point Pechell
Point Pease
Point Fisher
Point Snell
Point Stephens
Point Bennett
Point Parry
Point Pinkerton
Point Pinkerton
Point Pinkerton

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

others that the culture of the Melville and Bathurst Islanders was markedly different from that of the adjacent mainland people.

It seemed evident, also, that this difference in the cultures was the result of isolation for which two possible factors were responsible: (a) the natural water barrier created by the Dundas and Clarence Straits (Fig. 1), and (b) the inability of the Tiwi to cross those swift and dangerous tideways in their primitive canoes. These canoes consisted of no more than a folded sheet of eucalyptus bark, sewn together at either end with strips of lawyer vine, caulked with mud, and strengthened at the gunwales with light saplings. The old men of Melville Island assured me that, before Cooper brought across the mainland wooden canoe (1905) bark canoes were their only means of water transport.

I am convinced, from my personal experience with similar canoes in north-eastern Arnhem Land, and my sea journeys across the Dundas and Clarence Straits, that the bark canoes of the Tiwi were far too weak to have withstood the buffetings of those turbulent waters. Nor would it have been possible for the mainlanders to have made the journey before they acquired the wooden canoes from the Malays, which reliable historical records indicate was not before the end of the eighteenth century.[8] Previous to that time, these people would have had only a bark canoe similar to that used by the Melville and Bathurst Islanders. It would be some time, too, after the aborigines acquired their new wooden craft, before they would be sufficiently skilled to make that perilous journey to Melville Island, even had they wished to do so. Further, the Tiwi were notably unfriendly and killed anyone who visited their shores. It is likely, then, that during the historically short time that the aborigines of the mainland possessed the wooden canoe, their visits would have had little, if any, effect on the culture of the Tiwi.

From this evidence, it appears certain that for an unknown, and possibly a lengthy period, the aborigines of the Tiwi tribe have been almost, if not completely, isolated from outside cultural influences.

This supposition is supported by Hart (1930, p. 170), who states that, "It was impossible, in fact, quite unnecessary, for them (the Tiwi) to visit the mainland in their bark canoes, . . . Until the advent of white men, the Melville Islanders were not aware that any other people existed but themselves."

Foelsche (1882, p. 17), however, states that "The Melville Islanders occasionally visited the mainland for the purpose of stealing lubras (women),

[8] Mountford, 1956, p. 410.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

CHAPTER I

The Art of the Tiwi

1. THE ART FORMS

ALTHOUGH Melville Island is separated from the mainland of Australia by the Dundas Strait, only fourteen miles in width, the art forms on either side of this swift-running tideway bear little resemblance to each other. That of the mainland, of which the bark and cave paintings of Oenpelli are typical (Mountford, 1956, pp. 112–264; Spencer, 1928, pp. 802–24), is representational, and among the most decorative art forms employed by the Australian aborigines, while that of Melville Island is highly formalized, and cannot be interpreted without the aid of the artist. In this respect (although they employ different motifs) the art of the Melville Islanders resembles that of the aborigines of Central Australia (Mountford, 1937, pp. 84–95).

2. MEDIUMS OF EXPRESSION

The aborigines of Melville Island,[8] like those on the mainland (Spencer, 1928, p. 793) painted designs on the inside of the sheets of bark that made up their wet-weather shelters. Basedow (1913, p. 320, Pls. 19–20) figured bark paintings he collected from bark shelters on Melville Island, and Campbell (1834, p. 151), referring to shelters he saw near Fort Dundas (Punata), in Apsley Straits, writes, "Some of them were ornamented with figures drawn in white pipeclay; one, in particular, was neatly and regularly done all over, representing the cross-bars of a cell."[9]

Under normal tribal conditions, however, it is in the carving and painting of the elaborate burial poles and the ceremonial spears, coupled with the decorating of the large bark baskets, that the aborigines of Melville Island find an outlet for their artistic efforts.

The effect of the *pukamuni* burial ceremony was evident in many of the bark paintings collected on the expedition. For example, Pl. 3D, Pl. 54F, and Pl. 54A, are essentially the same designs as a Melville Island artist would use to

[8] For the sake of simplicity I will, in future, use the term, Melville Island, or the tribal name, Tiwi, to indicate the Melville and Bathurst Island culture, both of which are part of the same tribal unit.

[9] This would have been a design similar to that on bark painting (Pl. 52D).

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3: Hart E-5 (1928-1929) 1930 OI20 Tiwi OI20

THE TIWI OF MELVILLE AND BATHURST ISLANDS

By C. W. M. HART[1]

MELVILLE and Bathurst Islands lie off the north coast of Australia some fifty to eighty miles north-east of Port Darwin. They are divided from the mainland by Dundas Straits, which at their narrowest part are about twenty-five miles wide, this being the approximate distance between the Vernon Group and Cape Gambier on Melville Island. The latter is the largest island in the Commonwealth of Australia with the exception of Tasmania, being some seventy miles long by forty miles wide, and containing about one and a half million acres. Bathurst Island is about one-third of that size, and is separated from its neighbour by Apsley Strait, which varies in width from about a quarter of a mile opposite the mission to two or three miles below Fort Dundas.

The first settlement in Northern Australia was made on Melville Island at a spot named Fort Dundas in Apsley Strait. It was founded on the 26th September, 1824, by Captain Gordon Bremer, R.N., of H.M.S. *Tamar*, who had been specially sent from Sydney for the purpose. Chiefly owing to difficulties with the natives, the settlement was abandoned on 31st March, 1829, when the convicts, troops, stores, etc., were transferred to Fort Wellington, on the Coburg Peninsula of the mainland. To-day a few piles of stones and a dilapidated ramparted ditch are all that is to be seen of this outpost of empire.

From 1829 until 1911, when the Sacred Heart Mission Station was established on Bathurst Island, no permanent settlement was made on either of these islands, though they were visited from time to time, and various buffalo shooters and timber-getters resided there for varying periods, the best-known of them, R. J. Cooper, having lived on Melville (where his house still stands) from 1894 until 1914. At present Bathurst Island is a native reserve with the missionaries as protectors, and hence

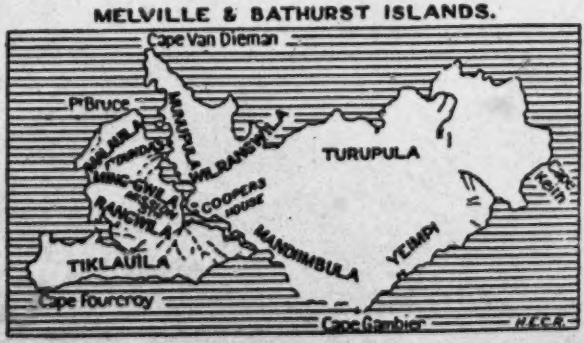
[1] This paper contains some of the results of research carried out as Science Research Scholar of the University of Sydney and with the aid of a grant from the Australian National Research Council.

3: Hart E-5 (1928-1929) 1930 OI20 Tiwi OI20

in the same way as such words as Larakia, Worgaits, Uwaidja, etc., are used. For example, if a Melville Islander at home is asked who a certain group of natives are, he will reply in his own language that there are, *e.g.*, two *Tiklauila* and two *Munupula*, these being horde names. Ask him the same question in Darwin about another group and he will reply, *e.g.*, "*Yatapinti Tiwi, irira Larakia*" (four Tiwi and two Larakia); he does not mean to insult the Larakia by denying them the status of men; he is merely applying the term *Tiwi* to men of his own tribe. Should he be uncertain of the tribe of the other, he will say "*Yatapinti Tiwi, irira wanarui*" (literally "four Tiwi and two blackfellows"); *wanarui* being a term denoting black fellows as distinct from white men.

In other words, when at home on the Islands, a man thinks of himself as a *Tiklauila* or a *Munupula*, or whatever his horde may be, since there he feels strongly his bond of solidarity with the fellow members of his horde. When in contact with other tribes, however, as in Darwin, he thinks of himself as Tiwi, a member of a group which despite the divisions inside it, is nevertheless a group distinct from other tribes, and this seems quite an adequate reason for us to adopt Tiwi as the tribal name.

The hordes number nine, five on Melville and four on Bathurst Island. This division is not strictly accurate, as may be seen from the accompanying map; the *Malauila* territory, while mainly on Bathurst stretches across Apsley Strait on to Melville, while a portion of Bathurst Island, including the site of the Mission Station, is *Mandiimbula* territory.



MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF THE TIWI HORDES

6: Hart E-5 (1928-1930) 1954 0120 Tiwi 0120

The southern section of Bathurst

Island (Hart 1930) is inhabited by a subtribe called the Tiklauila. In 1911 a Roman Catholic Mission station was established at the southeast tip of Bathurst Island, virtually in Tiklauila territory, and at the time of the present writer's field work this was the only white settlement. In the generation before the missionaries arrived the "big man" among the Tiklauila was Turimpi. Because of their complicated marriage and inheritance regulations the average Tiwi old man in the course of his lifetime accumulates an impressive number of wives and Turimpi was no exception to this rule. At the time of his death, which occurred toward the end of the 1890's at an age which was probably something approaching 70, Turimpi counted as his wives then living or pre-deceasing him no less than 25 females. Of these the only one we need to pay any attention to is the woman named Bongdadu. She, while Turimpi's wife, had borne numerous children, of whom three males grew to manhood—Antonio, born in approximately 1883, Mariano born three or four years later, and Louis born around 1893. Sometime between 1895 and 1900 she was widowed by the death of Turimpi, whereupon she married another elderly man, Murikambunga, to whom she bore two more sons—Tipperary, born around 1900, and Bob born about a year later. Bongdadu of course had numerous other children who did not survive childhood.[3] It is her five adult sons who concern us here.

Turimpi, as the number of wives suggests, was an important tribal figure during his lifetime. Importance, prestige, tendency to be spoken of as a "big man" are in Tiwi functions of a number of factors in which age, number of wives, fighting ability, wisdom in council, and "family" in the sense of having relatives who are also "big men," are all compounded. On all these counts Turimpi was important, and his prestige tended to carry on after his death. Since the horde or subtribe is a comparatively small group, ranging in size from 214 for the Tiklauila (the biggest) to 57 for the Mingwila (the smallest), there will seldom be more than two or three "big men" in a subtribe at the same time, and at certain periods there may be none at all since the few old men who have the age qualification may not have the other qualifications. Turimpi's death left the Tiklauila to some extent in this state. There were few other men with comparable seniority and none of them had the qualifications for informal leadership and local prestige that he had possessed. His death left a gap, and a gap that could hardly be filled by his eldest son Antonio, who at the time of his father's death was a youth of about 16 years of age. About thirty years later, in 1928 to 1930, the field work upon which the present paper is based was carried out.

ANTONIO

It so happened that the present writer had been with the Tiwi for nearly three months before he met Antonio, although during those three months he had been closely associated with two of his brothers, Mariano and Tipperary. These two gave Antonio a great build-up as one of the most important men around, as a "big man" in every possible Tiwi sense. But when encountered in person he proved most disappointing. The only words that fitted Antonio

11;Goodale E-5 (1954, 1962) 1963 CE20 Tiwi CE20

Tiwi invoke the power of a yam

By JANE C. GOODALE

IN 1912 SIR BALDWIN SPENCER, a professor of biology at the University of Melbourne, visited Melville Island, in the Timor Sea. There he observed a Tiwi tribal ceremony in which a number of young boys and girls participated in the ritual preparation of a species of yam the Tiwi called *Kulama*. Spencer wrote of this ceremony, "initiation of young men [and women] on Melville Island is intimately associated with what is known as a yam ceremony." This statement is particularly noteworthy, for, in 1954, when I visited the Tiwi for the first time and witnessed the annual *Kulama* ceremony, no initiates took part. The ceremony, however, was still being performed with no significant changes in the complex ritual procedures that Spencer had described more than forty years before.

That the *Kulama* ceremony can and does take place without initiates does not mean that Spencer was wrong to consider it an important part of initiation into adult life. It does mean that many of the new generation of Tiwi believe that such participation cannot prepare them adequately for a way of life that has been radically changed by contact with Western culture during the past fifty years.

In order to understand what this ceremony means to those who still perform it, one must first understand what the Tiwi consider to be adulthood. The Tiwi, now about a thousand in number, have lived for untold centuries on Melville and Bathurst Islands, which are situated thirty miles north of Darwin, the capital city of Australia's Northern Territory. The islands and surrounding waters are well supplied with food, and fresh water is plentiful. Economically and technically the Tiwi have been remarkably conservative. They came to the islands as hunters and gatherers of wild food, using crude chipped stone axes, digging sticks, simple wooden spears, and hunting dogs, and found that little else was needed to exploit the natural resources and to provide themselves with a stable, varied, and adequate diet. With the exception of the wallaby, the land animals of the two islands were small and nocturnal and could simply be collected during the day with little physical effort or skill. The few skills that were necessary were identifying tracks to find game and chopping out or digging up the sleeping animals. Young boys and girls were taught these techniques, since there was no essential sexual division of labor in food-collecting. Boys, however, re-

TIWI NATIVE on Melville Island expresses a grievance in an original song during the annual three-day *Kulama* ceremony.

[P. 11, (B)]

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 OI20 Tiwi OI20

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Fig. 1. Snake Bay Settlement

114 Islanders on a hunt. The trip took us to a small clearing on the right bank of the Paluwiunga River, ten miles upstream from where it empties into the Arafura Sea.

131 A brief glance at the map will help to further pinpoint this location. Ten degrees south of the equator and at a distance of twenty to fifty miles due north from the Australian Northern Territory capital of Darwin, lies the relatively large Melville Island (1,000 square miles), named for Viscount Henry Dundas Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, who authorized the coastal survey of 1818 during which the island was circumnavigated. To the west, separated by a narrow strait, lies the smaller Bathurst Island. The group of people with whom I found myself camped by the river bank were members of the Tiwi, a tribe of Australian Aboriginals whose country includes both these islands. Today about seven hundred members of the tribe live near to the southeast corner of Bathurst Island where they are in various ways administered to by the Sacred Heart Mission. On the northern coast of Melville Island, on a hill overlooking Snake Bay, near the mouth of the

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13:Barclay J-3 (ca. 1939)1939 OI20 Tiwi OI20

out from East Point, and from the nearest island of the Vernon group, were also clearly visible as we passed over them. Straight ahead, Melville and Bathurst Islands now showed up, the hills a darker blue, and every moment they became more and more distinctly visible.

We turned west again as we reached the shores of Melville Island. Below, and near at hand, in turn were sandy beaches, cliffs that come straight down to the water's edge, or low mangrove-flats through which wind serpentine inlets of salt water. Inland, low green hills are covered with open tropical forest, denser on the lower slopes and thinning towards the arid, stony summits. Fan-palms grow among the tropical eucalypts, and the familiar pandanus palm borders open grassy flats just as it does on the mainland across the narrow seas. Buffalo, now so much reduced in numbers that nobody shoots them, feed on the flats, and in the forest-covered hills are many kangaroos and wallabies. Little bays, and now and then projecting lines of reef, make natural boat-harbours, and far away across the tree-tops a wide expanse of shining water seems to be a great lake surrounded by wooded hills—it is actually an arm of the sea on the eastern side of Cape Van Diemen.

The funnel-shaped entrance to Apsley Strait, the mile-wide, fifty-mile-long stretch of fast-flowing waterway that separates the two islands, soon appeared beneath us. Looking towards the north, on the eastern side of this narrow silvery passage, one sees the wooded hills, the dense patches of vivid green jungle, and the open swampy plains of Melville Island. To the west, on the Bathurst Island side of the entrance, dense plantations of coco-nut palms occupy the foreground. There are cleared fields with a wall of forest beside them, white roofs among the palms, and beyond again are thickly-timbered heights.

DENSE mangroves, of a deeper green than that of forest or jungle foliage, give contrast at the water's edge on either side of the narrow strait, which, a silver streak in the blue distance, leads on to the sea, faintly visible far beyond at the height at which we were flying. The tide runs through this strait like a mill-race; but at the moment it was dead-water, and, with sail set, a large dug-out canoe was making across from Melville to Bathurst Island. As the 'plane banked round preparatory to landing, I saw, beyond the canoe and across the strait, the iron roof of the only European dwelling on Melville Island.

It was formerly the permanent camp of Jee Cooper, a famous buffalo-hunter; but, now, since Cooper's death, even this solitary outpost has long been deserted. It is more than a century since the old military settlement of Fort Dundas, at the northern end of Apsley Strait, was abandoned. Nothing of the fort now remains except a few heaps of stone, and, buried in thick scrub, the grass-grown brickwork that faced the surrounding deep trench. The area of Melville Island is 2,240 square miles. Bathurst Island is only half as large. Although Melville Island may, some day, come within the scope of North Australian settlement schemes, the major part of Bathurst Island is vested in perpetuity in the authorities of the Mission of the Sacred Heart, and the latter island will remain, fortunately almost entirely in its virgin state, a sanctuary alike for man and beast.

We taxied to a standstill on the well-kept landing-ground of the Sacred Heart Mission in the presence of many spectators. Notified of the time of our arrival by means of the wireless

[p. 14(A)]

13:Barclay J-3 (ca. 1939)1939 OI20 Tiwi OI20

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"SIXTY MILES OF SHARK-INFESTED WATERS LIE BETWEEN BATHURST ISLAND AND THE MAINLAND."

[P.15(C)]